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Dear Harold and Lil:

First of all, I want to thank you for your kind words about my article-letter to the Wall Street Journal. I was mildly disappointed they did not print it, but not shocked!

I hope both of you are doing well. We are fine except for my white shirt I managed to throw an entire cup of coffee on.

I had an unusual opportunity last Wednesday. I got to interview Pierre Salinger. I had gone to the bookstore to buy a funny book of cartoons for a guy who now has my dad's old job, who had to have surgery. I saw Salinger was coming for a book signing, and it was not widely advertised. So I went.

They had us set up in a kind of interview type setting, Salinger at a desk with books. I asked a couple of questions, then let others. Most were shy older people, so they only asked a couple questions. I ended up asking about 12 questions.

The highlights are:

He does not believe either JFK or RFK were killed in a conspiracy.

He thinks JFK would have beaten Goldwater in 1964.

LBJ was very kind to him.

He never discussed with LBJ the fact LBJ thought JFK was killed in a conspiracy.

He says Jackie and Onassis were in love when they got married, and Ari was good to her and the kids. Salinger stayed close to Jackie over the years.

He says the world would never be the same after JFK's death.

He thinks RFK would have defeated Nixon.

He did not know John Sherman Cooper.

He said JFK was slow in pushing civil rights, but said the foreign policy crises occupied his time.

He does not believe JFK would have sent 500,000 troops into Vietnam, and said JFK was withdrawing 2,500 of the 16,000 troops.

He keeps in touch with Mac Kilduff, but Kilduff couldn't make it to Louisville,

Said highly placed Republican friends say their only hope is Dole refutes the nomination and they get someone else.

Has read part of MacNamara'a book but not JFK and Vietnam.

Said the CIA and the military lied to JFK over the Bay of Pigs.

Said MacNamara was the strongest hawk in the JFK administration, as far as Vietnam. Says Mac was right to write his book.

He would answer a few questions, then sign a few books.
His hearing is good. When he was signing a book, a guy came up to me and asked me about books on JFK and his murder, I of course recommended Selections, Case Open and Accessories, and Never Again! Salinger over heard and said we should read Case Closed. I said he should read Weisberg's Case Open. I also asked him if he was aware Posner's book was withdrawn from Pulitzer Prize contention because of the controversy of making up interviews, He said he had not heard that.

At the end, I gave him a copy of my article and said it criticized Oliver Stone. He said he also had written one. I said I had missed it, he said it was only printed in France!

I guess I am sort of egotistical in giving him my article, but what the hell.

Salinger was very charming, a nice guy who seemed to enjoy the limelight. I of course was also charming, and did not seek to confront him or argue with him. I realize it is this guy's friends who were murdered, but I asked him some good questions.

At one time, he spent 2 days with Nikita Kruschev. Liked him. K gave him a box of Cuban cigars, which Castro had given him. 150 of them. When he got back to Washington, he took them to the White House and offered to split them with JFK. Kennedy said this could cause a scandal. Salinger said come on, only you me and Nikita know about it. He said Kennedy made him take the cigars to customs and turn them in!

Said K was thrown out because he was trying to reduce the power of the Communist Party.

Most people were too shy to ask questions, so I did my best Cokie Roberts imitation and ended up more or less interviewing him.
I had speed read his book, so I threw him some softballs. I also asked him some general interest questions, like the ones on Jackie and Onassis. The bookstore actually thanked me for asking him things.

I appreciated his kindness to me and his charming manner. At most book signings, the authors are nice. But it would be easy for a guy like Salinger to take the attitude we are all a bunch of hillbilly pig farmers, an attitude we see sometimes with various groups. But he was very nice. I do think he looked at me kind of funny, because I asked some fairly sophisticated questions. Probably thought I was some know it all college prof. Well, he would be right about the know it all part!

He was in town speaking to the Jewish Woman's Conference on Aging.

I liked Salinger, and he was easy to talk to. I asked him about today's politicians, like Newt Gingrich, and he just laughed. He said some of today's pols are rather shallow. I asked him who the most intelligent presidents were. He of course kind of favored JFK. He also thought Reagan and Clinton were smart pols, Reagan for his ability to rally people behind him, Clinton for surviving politically and getting into such a strong position for reelection.

So, it was fun for me to talk to him, and I never guessed I would get to ask everything I wanted. I asked him about JFK's colorful personal life, and he said maybe today people are becoming less interested in a guy's sex life, and more interested in ideas. He said Clinton's election tended to show this.

Of course, in his new book, Salinger discusses his three marriages and his mistresses, and his wives' boyfriends. I have not had much luck getting Betsy to adopt the Continental approach. She won't let me have a girlfriend. Or a mistress. Or any fun like that at all!

Hell, if Betsy won't let me have a mistress, I might as well run for office!

If Salinger read my article, I hope he comes away with some interesting facts, like Sen. Russell's views, or the ballistics evidence. Or who Harold Weisberg is and why should he care.

I think that the era of JFK was a fascinating one, if for no other reason than many of those in his administration are still alive to interview.

Salinger did point out that JFK was about the only Democrat to ever reduce taxes.He defended Jackie and the auction. pointing out that they had to pay a 65-70% tax rate on the estate.

We printed out Waketh the Watchman and it is on my desk. I'll try to read it this week.

Otherwise, we are still here and doing better than the local tornado victims. The damage was about 20 miles from here. The boat dock next to the ramp I use was picked up and put down by the tornado. In a miracle, no one was killed. When people say they would believe in God if only they saw a miracle. believe me, the hundreds of destroyed houses with not one death is a miracle. Sort of like me graduating from law school!

Betsy just started a new consulting job at the local state prison. Medical records. To get her ready, I have been walking around singing the old Merle Haggard song, "I turned 21 in prison, doing life without parole". She doesn't think it is as funny as I do!

As long as I have been around the courthouse, it still gives me the willys when I see those orange jumpsuits and leg irons. Makes you wonder how one's fate can go so wrong.

Well, thanks for the books. I don't know when we are coming up. Depends on Betsy's job, etc. In hindsight, I wish we had come up earlier this spring. But with Betsy having spent 2 or 3 months with her dad last year, it seems like we are getting farther and farther behind

So, we shall see.

Love,

Bill

PS Enclosed article on dolphins is the ones I wrote Jane NOrris about. My friends run Sugarloaf Lodge and are the ones with a Navy contract to rehab Navy dolphins and release them. Must teach them to chase fish and feed. Irresponsible idiots like the ones in this article think you should just release them. Which would be like taking my German Shepherd out and letting go back to his wolf heritage. They released them illegally near where we fish. One swam back to the Navy base, which you can actually see(Radar Domes) from near where they were released.

I may point out to Jane I told her about this story and the JFK new pictures one. Saw Posner on CBS, correctly pointing out no one ever ID'D the Babuschka lady. But he also said he had never seen one of the Jack Ruby ones, which I had seen and is fairly common. So POSNER is either a liar or an idiot. Maybe both. The one of Ruby at the Oswald press conference.